# WHIRRAKEE

October 2010 Vol. 31 No. 9

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

## Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

### Office Bearers for 2009 - 2010

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| President | Jan Orr | 5443 5668 |
| Senior Vice President | Matthew Comer | 0409 162627 |
| Junior Vice President | *position vacant* | |
| Secretary | Anne Bridley | 5442 6188 |
| Minute Secretary | Joy Clusker/Rod Orr | |
| Treasurer | Ben Goonan | |
| Membership Officer | Anne Bridley | 5442 6188 |
| Excursion organiser | *position vacant* | |
| Syllabus organiser | Ben Goonan | |
| Librarian | Diana Collier (an assistant is still required) | 5443 0137 |
| Garden Convenor/Secretary | Matthew Comer | 0409 162 627 |
| Hall Management | Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors) | 0407 427179 |
| *Whirrakee* contact | Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au | 5443 2797 |

**Membership** of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

**General meetings** are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

**Committee meetings** are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Stuart Fraser, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Bill Holsworth plus *two positions vacant*

**Excursions** are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

**Fauna Study Group**: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

**Chairman**: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
**Secretary**: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
**Equipment Officer**: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

**Bird Observing:** Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5449 3479 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

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Front cover photo?...see page 2

# WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 31, No. 9, October 2010
*Whirrakee* takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

*Editor's Note*
*What a spring we are having! I am not only talking about wildflowers and animal babies, because judging by the photos in the centrefold, this is also the season of the slime moulds. It seems that Rod Orr is specialising in photographing very small things these days. The club has decided to keep the colour pages going, so all you digital camera owners out there, please send me your spring photos, along with a short description or story. One drawback of a more pictorial Whirrakee is that more lengthy articles and reports may have to wait a month or so to get published because of space constraints.*
*During the Annual General Meeting last month, many office bearers have gracefully accepted another term, as no new blood had volunteered for these positions. However, the club will need some new people on the committee to avoid a simultaneous burn-out of the executive. If you have just a little time and inclination, there are several vacancies on the committee.*

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**Photographer:** Jase
This goanna (*Varanus* sp.) was photographed north of Maldon in early September. Its visible part was about 100mm long and the hole was about 50mm wide. The dead tree had fallen very recently, so may be his home rotated by 90 degrees in the process. This situation reminds me of the story of Owls house that came down after a big storm, and Winnie-the- Pooh's amazed description how everything had changed angles and positions. This goanna does not seem concerned, obviously his cupboard wasn't blocking his entrance after the storm.
This image celebrates the imminent arrival of the club latest publication, 'Frogs and Reptiles of the Bendigo District' where you will be able to look up this lizard's proper name and everything else.

## Short Notices

### October Excursion

*Organiser:* John Lindner (phone. 54483406)
*Date*: Sunday 24th October
*Location*: Coliban Main Water Channel and associated bushland, Sedgwick
*Meeting Place:* Clubrooms at 9.00am, proceeding in convoy to the site
*Bring:* Morning and afternoon tea and lunch. Backpack to carry your own supplies, camera, magnifying glass, binoculars.
*Length:* You can come for the morning or stay all day.
*Subject:* Wild flowers and birds.
*Attractions:* Green-comb Spider-orchid, Golden Moth and other orchids and various daisy species
*Walk:* It is possible that we could walk about 3km along the channel track to The Springs, where some extremely interesting infra-structure is part of the channel system. We would then have to walk 3km back or arrange a car shuffle. This walk is optional.

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### Australian Environmental Law – how it protects ecological communities and what this means for you

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is the Australian Government's main environmental law. It protects matters of national environmental significance such as nationally threatened species and ecological communities. A number of nationally threatened ecological communities occur in Victoria, including the **Grey box grassy woodlands**

- How do ecological communities get listed as threatened under the EPBC Act?
- How does the EPBC Act work to protect listed species and communities?
- And how might this affect you?
- How can the Department work with you to comply with the Act?

Officers from the Australian Government's Department of Environment will be in Bendigo this month to answer these questions. Two sessions have been organised.

**Date:** Tuesday 26 October

**Where:** Bendigo Public Library Lecture Theatre (259 Hargreaves Street, Bendigo).

**First session:** 2:00 to 4:00 pm - mainly for persons employed by local governments, Vic Roads, CFA, CMA, etc.

**Second session:** 7:30 to 9:30 pm – mainly for land owners, LandCare groups, Friends groups, Naturalists, and others concerned about conservation of nature.

Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available before and after each session.
Further information on the EPBC Act is available from the Department's website:
http://www.environment.gov.au/
If you are planning to come to either or both sessions could you please send an email to fraserds1@hotmail.com
These information sessions have been organised by The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club and the Bendigo and District Environment Council and are supported by the City of Greater Bendigo.

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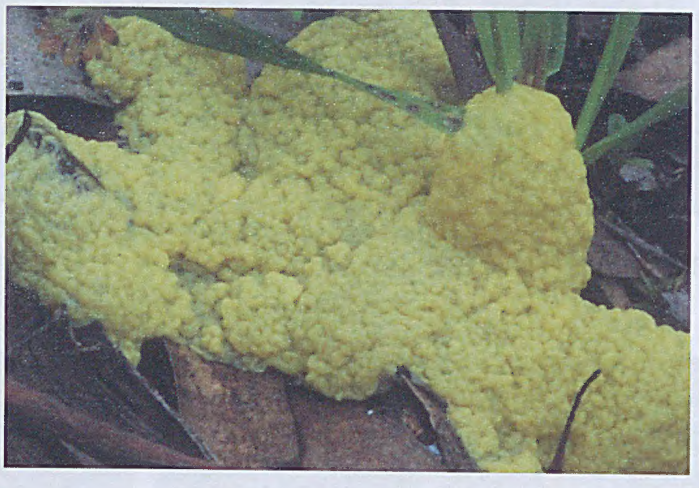
### Locust campaign

There has been a lot of publicity about the expected locust plague, and much government information is available at the DPI website: http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/locusts I wonder if anybody has done the sums, comparing the cost of the massive campaign PLUS the cost to the environment if large-scale spraying goes ahead, with the cost of compensation for farmer's lost crops. See this video for an alternative view to all the publicity (ed).
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWZwRy2WpaQ

**In praise of slime moulds**

Slime moulds are an odd group of organisms, neither plant nor fungus, although in the past, they have often been classified with the fungi. They have several distinct life stages. When they are at their 'plasmodium' stage, they absorb organic matter and ingest bacteria. Rod Orr wondered whether they represent the next wave of organism that comes after the fungi. Perhaps the bacteria feasting on rotting fungi, provide food for slime moulds? They certainly grow in the same sort of places... Once the food supply diminishes, or other adverse conditions are experienced, sporangia (sporophores) are formed. Eventually spores are released from these and germinate to form myxamoebae (amoeba-like cells that may develop flagella, if moisture is around), two of which fuse. Cell division then results in another plasmodium.

The one below is called Dog-vomit slime mould (*Fuligo septica*). The one on the left 'grew' at the base of a lemon scented gum and was photographed by Annette Mouat in April this year. This photo was, in fact, one of the instigators to get colour photos into the *Whirrakee*. Annette described it as having not a very soft, matte and finely pimpled surface.



The same species, but at a later stage, beginning to settle down and produce its sporophores. This one was photographed by Rod Orr at One-Tree Hill (17/9).

This white one is also from One Tree Hill – and is just beginning to produce its sporophores.
(Rod Orr)

*Dictydiaethelium plumbeum* was found on the bark of an old Yellow Box Tree, also in the One Tree Hill forest. Rod and Jan revisited the creature several times to see what would happen as it matured. They had a lot of trouble finding it again each time, because of the colour change. The size of the mass was about 3 x 2cm.

September 9

September 16

September 17

September 21 ....what will happen now?

Rod and Jan also visited the Wombat Forest, September 2...

*Trichia decipiens* was listed as widespread and common at the Melbourne Botanic Gardens list of slime moulds, and also as occurring in other parts of the world (*Arcyria decipiens* was listed as a synonym). The diameter of the largest sporophore is only about 1mm.

There were also still a few interesting fungi at the forest...

Small Dung Buttons, *Poronia erici*. This is probably getting much too close to a Wombat. Rod wonders whether they eat the spores of this fungus or whether the spores just drift around and colonise Wombat droppings.

*Geoglossum sp*. A tiny fungus, growing amongst mosses and other small plants.

Photographer: Jane Cleary
Field-natting at its best. Five woolly-headed field-nats at Black Rock in August. Matthew Comer, Jan Orr, Pam Sheean, John Lindner and Joy Clusker were looking and photographing something tiny. Rod Orr is missing from this photo, because he was lying down taking photographs of something even tinier…

*Riccia* sp., a liverwort, with fruiting bodies. Botany students invariably get these little 'umbrellas' as longitudinal sections on a slide, to study under a microscope! They certainly make a lot more sense in 3-D than in 2-D. The umbrella-top (archegonium) is 1-2mm across and eventually releases spores.

**August Observations**
Report of Waterbird survey - Sewerage Farm
Blue-billed Duck with very bright blue bill
Summer revisit to see the site with lower water levels Strange bird call - possibly Marsh Harrier.
Whipstick/Kamarooka - Purple-gaped H-eater
Burnside Rd - White-fronted Honeyeater

**Additional August/September Observation**
*by Glenise Moors*
At the August meeting, I passed around the partly constructed nest of the Red-capped Robin I had found on 4/8/10 at the base of the sapling she had been building it in. There had been strong winds and rain on 31st to 1st - the previous weekend. The nest consisted mainly of dry grass and lichen with some tiny sticks.

On 17/9/10, I returned and noticed the female 'sitting tight' on a completed nest in a nearby grey box sapling. At intervals the male came to feed her. She did leave the nest to feed for herself a couple of times and I watched her chase away another small bird. This was a Flame Robin (brown bird). This surprised me as I had searched the robin site during the previous week and declared they had all left for this year.

In a large Grey Box tree nearby the White-winged Choughs were making a fuss. They had two young almost ready to fledge. Sometimes I noticed them stand up and stretch their wings. There was a cold breeze and at times, an adult came to the nest to sit on them. Of course, it was very noisy when the group of adults came to the nest to feed or just be excited.

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**September Observations**
*Matthew Comer*
Found a Basket (Cage) Fungus at the club gardens - it was dug up during weeding (Sept 8). Grey Shrike-thrush (pair) seen nesting in a potting shed at Golddfields Revegetation – they have nested there for several years. They had produced young, but all were found dead from unknown causes, but possibly related to the cold, wet weather.

*Anne Bridley*
Collared Sparrowhawk seen flying over rooftops at Myers St, Central Bendigo - chased by a Magpie. During an excursion to the Bendigo Creek streamside at Huntly, only 8 native plant species were seen along 7km of the creek in highly modified vegetation. However, this was good bird habitat with 45 species recorded for the day (in late August) - 3 species of frog were also recorded.
*Barry Cooper* passed on his observation of Rainbow Lorikeets near Guys Hill Road, Strathfieldsaye. This was the first time that Barry had seen them here. They were observed in mid-August.

*Rod and Jan Orr*
We visited the Skylark Road area of the Whipstick very late in the afternoon (Sept 8) and wandered through the eucalyptus harvesting area (the mallee regrowth was only about 50cm tall). Jan had walked a few hundred metres ahead, but I was stopped by a sharp bird-call. I could hear the whirring of wings all around me but it still took some time to locate them. When I did, I realised that I was surrounded by Shy Hylacolas, who all seemed to be feeding on the ground and in the low mallees - that is, when they weren't chasing each other around and buzzing each other off. I caught up to Jan and showed her how to locate them - they obligingly performed again and didn't seem to be concerned that we were just standing still in the middle of their playground. We also revisited a spot along Millwood Road where Jan had spotted a strangely coloured Magpie. At first sight it reminded me of one of those pigeons that are mostly white with a few darker markings. Seen through binoculars and telescope, it was very obviously a Magpie, which was almost all white with a few black markings on the flight feathers and the tail and just a few dark markings on the head. We have seen it there on several occasions now. We also found Flame Robins at Shadbolts Picnic area (and separately, at Mt Sugarloaf on Sept 3), and Variegated Fairy Wrens at Shadbolts, Skylark Road, and Rifle Range Road. There are still a few reports of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos in various spots in the

forests around Bendigo - they seem to be in very small separated groups now of 2 or 3 birds.

*Jane Cleary*
On the flooded plains North of the Kamarooka, just after crossing Bendigo Creek, 2 Brolga were seen (August 28). Scarlet Mintbush was in flower in the Kamarooka Forest section of the Greater Bendigo National Park. The fencing around Black Rock in the Northern Whipstick has been quite successful, resulting in protection from goats grazing the shrubs (particularly *Phebalium festivum* which had almost disappeared from this area). There were also plenty of birds amongst the flowering shrubs) inside the fenced area.

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**Bendigo Field Naturalist's Club**
**Presidents Report 2009 – 2010, by Jan Orr**

I welcome this opportunity to acknowledge all our members who work to make our club such a dynamic environment group in the community.

*Whirrakee*
Every month, except January, the *Whirrakee* appears for our small group of *Whirrakee* folders to fold, address and post. Sabine Wilkens is the 'good fairy' who makes this possible. She edits our contributions and prepares the magazine for printing. I thank Sabine, on behalf of the BFNC, for her essential work. I also thank the small band of regular *Whirrakee* folders and wrappers for meeting at the BFNC clubrooms every 1st Wednesday of the month at 4:30 pm (except January). Occasionally extra help is needed to cover for people who are away. I thank the club members who responded and helped out to cover for absences.
In July 2010 it was decided to trial a colour centre page in the magazine. Good autumn and winter rains had resulted in a wonderful period of fungi growth. Fungi that we hadn't seen for years were found and photographed with the wonderful digital cameras that many members now possessed. (This shows how long it has been since we've had a fungi season like this. Most photographers were using print and slide film during the previous wet winter.) The response from members has been encouraging and some members are now e-mailing photos of their interesting and curious bush discoveries directly to Sabine for inclusion in *Whirrakee*. It is hoped that this response will continue to grow.

*Speakers*
Ben Goonan, our BFNC Speaker Coordinator, selected speakers to speak on a diverse range of topics at our General meetings. We were able to learn more about geology, Charles Darwin, astronomy, bird monitoring, environmental restoration, revegetation and changing landscapes. The club is indebted to Ben for his work in putting together such an interesting speaker program for the club.

*Excursions*
The club has conducted excursions on either the Saturday or Sunday following the General meeting throughout the year. Anne Bridley has continued her series of excursions along the Great Dividing Trail surveying the flora and fauna of the area. Rod Orr led an excursion to the Wombat Forest along Babbington Rd, to look for fungi and Jane Cleary led an excursion to the Whipstick and Black Rock area of the Greater Bendigo National Park.

*Publications*
At time of writing, the book written by the late Darren Green and Dale Gibbons titled "Frogs and Reptiles of the Bendigo District" is at the printers. The club is looking forward to launching the book before the end of the year. Bill Holsworth has put in many hours of work editing and proof-reading the book. Rod Orr assisted with the proof-reading in the final stages of its production. The club thanks all involved with the book for their work. This book will be a most valuable addition to our list of publications.

*BFNC garden*
Matthew Comer has coordinated the development and maintenance of the BFNC garden for some years now. We are all aware that the past 10 years of drought have presented him with some difficulties in this task however on the other hand, this has enabled us to better understand the resilience of our local flora. A meeting with members of the Bendigo Native Plant Club was arranged in March to get their thoughts on the future development of the garden. Their comments were in general, favourable for the garden as it is, but two problem areas were identified, the section of the garden bordering the fence beside the fire station and the section near the hall entrance. It has become clear, that our love of natural vegetation is not shared by all, who use the hall, as someone pulled out the tall Kangaroo Grass that was growing splendidly beside the path to the front door. Perhaps we should give some attention to this problem and design a garden that is a little more formal for this section. Matthew's contribution to the club is a very large one and we are appreciative of his work.

*Hall Management*
I have been told on many occasions that, the City of Greater Bendigo regard the BFNC in its role as Hall Managers as a model for other groups that use CGB facilities. For this high regard, we thank Maurie Lewis in his role as bookings officer and cleaner and BFNC members Bill Holsworth, Ben Goonan and Rob Moors for their work in efficiently solving any problems that arise with the running of the building that occur during the year. In September 2009, the CGB convened a meeting with representatives from the BFNC, the Golden Square Senior Citizens and Legacy House, with a view to Legacy building a new facility for its members on the vacant land on the south side of the clubrooms. The plan was to incorporate this new building with the existing building, which would be refurbished and upgraded. There has been no follow up information regarding this proposal. In the meantime, in response to requests from hall users, the CGB have continued to maintain the building and have replaced the heater in the main hall, repaired the air-conditioner, water heater and stove in the kitchen.

*BFNC Committee*
I thank all members of the committee for accepting the responsibility of executive office. The secretary and treasurer's positions carry with them special responsibilities and I thank Anne Bridley and Rob Moors for all their work for the club throughout the year.

*Conservation - submissions, forums, meetings*
For almost all of the club's history, members have been involved in work to conserve the natural environment. Our members have written submissions, attended forums and meetings. We thank the BFNC representatives who have worked so hard for what must have seemed on many occasions as a futile pursuit. They have done so with a polite persistence that has enhanced the club's standing in the community. The BFNC is an important community organization, that works for greater understanding and preservation of the natural environment. We are fortunate to have members who are willing to contribute their time and share their knowledge to create a greater understanding of the natural environment in the community.
They all deserve our thanks.

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**Treasurer's report**

At the September Annual General Meeting, the treasurer's report was presented by Bill Holsworth and Rob Moors. Due to space constraints, the whole report cannot be printed here, but if anybody would like a copy, these are available on request. Please contact Rob Moors on 5439 6254 or Sabine Wilkens (see details on inside front cover)

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## Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

### General Meetings

**Wednesday, October 13** **7.30pm**
Rodger Elliot AM, author and horticulturalist will talk about 'the A – Z of Australian Plants – a 35 year old journey'.

**Wednesday, November 10** **7.30pm**
Neil Macfarlane from the Victorian Mallee-fowl Recovery Group Inc. will talk about ...have a guess... the Mallefowl Recovery Project.

**Wednesday, December 8** **6.30pm**
Rod will share with some us something about the Canning Stock Route plants. In December, we usually have an earlier starting time and begin the meeting with a shared meal. Details will be available by next month.

### Excursions

John Lindner will lead and excursion this month to the Coliban main water channel and associated bushland. See page 3 for details.

### Fauna Group

This group normally meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm. New and seasoned Club members are most welcome to attend.

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### Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

### SEANA Spring Camp 2010

Foster North, South Gippsland
Friday 15 - Monday 18 October 2010
Registration & deposit due by 16 July 2010
Contact: Wendy Savage ph. 5634 2246, email wsavage@dcsi.net.au or Phil Rayment ph. 5174 1730, email philrayment@dcsi.net.au

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### Another image of spring...

Annette Mouat submitted this photo of a pure white Bendigo Wax plant, *Philotheca verrucosa*. It was taken in the Mandurang Bushland/National Park off Fadersons Lane – Annette thought it is a strong colour contrast to the pink specimen of Kerri Norris' plant submitted by Peter Ellis for the September *Whirrakee*. There are literally thousands of wax plants in bloom at present but this is the only pure white one - even the backs of the buds are white

Don't forget to send in some of your spring photos...